

they were affected by “a sense of disorientation and helplessness” (164). Their expectations were deluded.

The second part of the book is organized around specific topics. Prais analyzes all the main aspects of collective life, including shelter to food, the various forms of welfare or self-help activities, sanitary conditions, the deterioration of families and networks, and the deportations in July 1942. She displays a mastery of the rich sources available.

The relationship of the refugees with the “original” inhabitants of the ghetto is carefully treated through all these facets. Indeed, there was “a similar background and national-religious identity of the Jewish refugees and the host community” (197). This fact did not preclude from the occurrence of conflicts around the issues of the acceptance of the newcomers and the equal redistribution of the scarce resources available, including food, accommodation, and work.

Did the refugees ever really feel “at home,” as is suggested by the books’ title? Prais analyses the various facets of the refugees’ fate. On the one hand, she stresses the engagement of individuals with spontaneous associations in the ghetto (not including the Judenrat), attempting to build a system of providing assistance for these masses of destitute Jewish refugees. But conflicts erupted with no respite, caused by “a kind of parochial patriotism” (219), and by a predominant sense of “estrangement and apathy” confronting the refugees because of their terrible fate (277). In all moments of daily life in the Warsaw ghetto, a clear “advantage of the locals” (230) can be detected.

Prais’ work is centered on the sources, without indulging in summary judgments. Nonetheless, her reconstruction is pitiless. As an example, one should look at the pages describing the appalling hygienic conditions in the so-called “points” (307ff.). Finally, it is significant that the Germans justified the general evacuation with the largely accepted notion that it was necessary to liberate the ghetto from the “unproductive and outcast elements” (408) par excellence: the refugees. No, they were not “at home” at all.

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***The Kishinev Ghetto 1941–1942: A Documentary History of the Holocaust in Romania’s Contested Borderlands.*** By Paul A. Shapiro. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2015. In Association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Document translations, Angela Iancu. xvii, 262 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Chronology. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$39.95, hard bound.

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While the story of Nazi-established ghettos during World War II in Poland and elsewhere has largely been researched and told, this is the first time attention is directed to the short-lived (July 1941–March 1942) saga of the Chişinău (Kishinev) Ghetto. The ghetto was set up immediately upon the entrance of the Nazi-allied Romanian troops into the town and liquidated but for a few exceptions in late October 1941, when the last major deportation of ghetto survivors to Transnistria ended.

In his preface, the author traces the history of the first attempts by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to obtain from the post-communist Romanian authorities documentation on the Holocaust in Romania. Shapiro shows how the initial reaction, particularly from the National Archive and its then-director, Ion

Munteanu, an admirer of war-time leader Ion Antonescu and the first acting president of the Ion Antonescu Foundation (89), was to both deny access and display a continuation of communist-authorities' efforts of Holocaust denial.

That Munteanu and his like failed was due to changing international circumstances, all of which are briefly sketched by Paul Shapiro, and the proof of the failure is displayed in the impressive selection of documents presented (141–256), some of which are for the first time made available in English. Shapiro's own 90-page long study, helped by the chronology, sets the events in the book within eastern Europe's specific forms of antisemitism, which adds to, rather than subtracts from, the Nazi genocidal orgy. Of particular relevance are the orders issued by Marshal Ion Antonescu (even before the actual invasion of Soviet territory) for the "cleansing of terrain," which was the Romanian equivalent of the Nazi *Sonderbehandlung*. Hand in hand with the "cleansing of terrain" went the order by Transnistria governor Gheorghe Alexianu to apply the so-called "Alexianu" solution to those who (for whatever reason) could not continue on the enforced marches toward the Transnistria deportation zone (between the Dniester and Bug Rivers), which is to say have them shot on the spot and buried (58).

The Chişinău Ghetto was thus from the start envisaged only as a temporary solution. It was preceded by atrocities committed by the Romanian army and police on their march toward Chişinău and the "cleansing of terrain" continued during the ghetto's brief existence. This included mass executions such as the massacres perpetrated at Visterniceni (August 1, 1941, when 411 of some 250 men and 200 women selected "for labor" were shot; and at Ghidighici (August 7, 1941, when the authorities removed from the ghetto 500 men and 25 women, executing the majority of them).

Most of the deaths that occurred before the last deportation, however, were due to the abominable sanitary conditions in an overcrowded environment, lack of medication, and starvation. On top of this, corruption was rampant among those in charge of the ghetto, which meant that Jews were robbed of goods they had managed to salvage. Circumstances arguably reached their climax on the eve of the deportation, when Jews were required to offer enormous bribes just to have deportation postponed. The Chişinău garrison commander, Eugen Dumitrescu, was the head of the illegal operation. After a commission of inquiry set up by Antonescu in December 1941 revealed his and others' blatant enrichment schemes, he committed suicide (74). Of course, what Romania's wartime *Conducător* objected to was not the plundering of the victims, which legislation passed under his rule legitimized as "Romanization" of property, but the fact that instead of reaching the coffers of the state, the plundered goods made it into the pockets of those in charge of the plunder. Shapiro shows how up to the last minute, Jews were forced to exchange their *lei* at disadvantageous rates into rubles (which they similarly had to exchange into *lei* upon the entrance of Romanian troops into Bessarabia) or into the German occupation currency called *Kassenschein*, valid beyond the Bug River (78–79).

The Chişinău ghetto had included, at different stages, between 10,000 and 11,000 Jews. Even the few who remained alive with the authorities' permission after the ghetto's liquidation began to be hunted again in March 1942. Very few managed to escape. By December 1942, over 55,000 Bessarabian Jews had been deported to Transnistria, of which 12,240 were still alive. "Long before murder ceased to be the principal goal of Romanian policy toward Bessarabian Jews" (1943), "most of the Jews of Chişinău were dead" (88).

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